

THINKETH NO EVIL.

HOPE DARING.

"I always thought there was something wrong about her," and Mrs. Allan's voice had an unmistakable ring of triumph in it.

"But you never said a word," Mrs. Winters ventured, timidly.

"I believe in exercising charity, Mrs. Winters. I did not know, so I kept still."

"You remember there is a broader charity, one that 'thinketh no evil,'" said a low, sweet voice. "I am always trying, though never quite succeed, to practice that kind." Mrs. Moore went on so gently that her hearers did not think of taking offence at her plain words. "Could we all embody that in our daily living how different the world would be."

There was an unseen listener to this conversation. The three ladies mentioned were assembled in the cozy sitting-room of Mrs. Smith. The hostess was preparing supper in the adjoining dining room. She stood by the table sifting sugar over the canned pears that were heaped in a low glass dish. She had been listening to the conversation in a half-indifferent way, her mind being partially occupied with the care of her supper. Mrs. Moore's words, however, arrested her wandering thoughts.

"Charity that 'thinketh no evil,'" she said to herself, "I never thought of it in that way. I wonder if I practice it?"

She hurried away to the pantry, and as she deftly cut thick slices of fruit cake, she went on: "It means so much. Can it be the only true charity or love, to resolutely abstain from harboring evil thoughts of any one?"

Just here she was called to the other room to help Mrs. Allan decide whether heliotrope silk or lavender satin should be used to line a photograph case that was being constructed. This weighty matter, added to her supper, drove the train of thought Mrs. Smith was following, from her mind.

Only once that evening did she give it a moment. That was at the tea-table, when Mrs. Winters said: "What queer taste in Mrs. Fletcher to take that Raymond girl into her home."

"Not so queer after all," Mrs. Allan said, as she accepted a second helping of pressed chicken from her host. "You see, Mary Fletcher likes money, and as the Raymond girl is glad to work for a home, there is a chance for some one to save a pretty sum. Oh, trust Mary Fletcher for getting work out of people."

Now, Mrs. Smith was in secret cordially seconding her guest's words when the pained look on Mrs. Moore's face recall-

ed the previous conversation. Francis Smith was a conscientious woman. Instead of blaming her neighbor, she mentally took herself to task for being so ready to assign a selfish motive to Mrs. Fletcher. "Case number one in which I am thinking evil," she concluded. "It would surely have been more Christ-like to have entertained the idea that she was actuated by pity for the unfortunate girl."

It was after nine before the guests, accompanied by husbands or sons, left the Smith farmhouse. Mrs. Smith stood on the porch and watched Mr. Winters' horse and cutter disappear down the snow-covered road. Then, with a little shiver, she went back to the fireside, where her husband and seventeen-year-old daughter, Lois, were sitting.

"What a gossip Mrs. Allan is," Mr. Smith said, looking up from his paper. "She knows everything about everybody."

"I think you are mistaken," and Mrs. Smith settled herself cosily in her favorite rocker. "She never knows any good of—"

She stopped. Her husband and daughter waited for her to finish, but Mrs. Smith, suddenly remembering her meditations, found herself covered with confusion.

"You might as well say it, mamma," Lois said, stretching her plump arms above her head. "She is a perfect contrast to dear Auntie Moore. Auntie can always say a good word for everybody."

Mrs. Smith made no reply. Indeed, she answered in the briefest manner possible to all remarks made to her in the time that elapsed before her head rested upon her pillow. But she thought. Then and also in the hours of wakefulness that came to her ere morning; and Mrs. Smith was both grieved and ashamed to find in how many thoughts come a coloring of evil.

"I will begin again," she thought. "I will not only speak good words, but I will think good thoughts," and a fervent prayer for help and guidance went. Now that her mind was at rest she immediately fell asleep. When next she opened her eyes it was broad daylight.

"John, John," she called, "see how late it is. We must get up right away. You know we are going to town to-day."

"No hurry," Mr. Smith replied, drowsily. "It's been raining for an hour, so we'll have to stay at home."

"Oh, I am so sorry we didn't go the day before yesterday! Now the roads will break up. If you ever would listen to me, John."

"I seem to be listening to you now. When you once get started there isn't

much chance of a man's doing otherwise."

Did you ever notice how, on a rainy morning, one cross remark will cloud the brightness of a whole family? This was proven in the case of the Smith family. Mr. Smith went about with an aggrieved look on his face, while even sunny-tempered Lois was guilty of closing doors violently and handling crockery in a reckless manner. As for the wife and mother, she was shrouded in deepest gloom. Her husband was unkind, her daughter was inconsiderate, the weather was unfavorable to her, as it always was. And in spite of all this, she was inwardly protesting against this swarm of petty worries she was charitably entertaining.

The rain fell silently. It was half past eleven and dinner was partly prepared. Mrs. Smith had just turned the nicely browned roast of beef, when Lois said:

"Why, here comes Rector Mills. What can have brought him out in such a storm?"

"No matter what is bringing him out, it is the want of his dinner that is bringing him here," her mother said severely. "I declare I'm getting tired of being used as a convenience. Not only the minister but the whole church value me solely for what I can do for them."

Lois looked at her mother in astonishment. "Why, mamma, I'm sure Mr. Mills don't feel that way," she began, the color deepening on her pink cheeks. "You know—"

But the entrance of their pastor prevented further words. Mr. Mills was a tall, spare man of fifty, with an intelligent forehead and serious gray eyes. He greeted mother and daughter kindly. To Lois' invitation to be seated, he said:

"Thank you, child, but my errand is a pressing one. Mrs. Smith, I have just come from Mrs. Laurence's. She is in great need."

"I hope you do not expect me to help Mrs. Laurence." Mrs. Smith's voice was icy. "I consider her wasteful and indolent."

Her pastor sighed wearily. "Perhaps you are right; still, I hoped to receive from you the loving forbearance that could help as Christ helped, because of the need, not the worthiness, of the poor. Mrs. Laurence is ill, not able to leave her bed. Her two little children have not tasted food since yesterday morning."

Mrs. Smith turned from her bountiful-spread table to the window. Uplifting her face to the laden clouds from which the rain was falling, she stood for a moment—a moment in which she cried mightily for aid to rid her heart of evil thinking, and also for forgiveness. Then, holding out her hand to Mr. Mills, she